



Office of School Readiness First Class Pre-K 2014-2015 Program Guidelines

INTRODUCTION

The Office of School Readiness

The Office of School Readiness (OSR) is housed within the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs and is charged with administering Alabama's state funded pre-K program. OSR funds First Class Pre-K classrooms through a competitive grant process and administers the program in a variety of settings that include:

- Public schools
- Private childcare and schools
- Head Start programs
- Community-based programs
- Faith-based programs
- Military programs

OSR was created in the 2000 legislative session. In the first year of operation, OSR funded eight pilot pre-K programs. Currently, OSR funds over 300 pre-K classrooms and supports the professional development of a high quality workforce through education, training, and on-site coaching.

The Code of Alabama sections relating to OSR are contained in Appendix N.

High Quality Pre-K

Alabama's state funded First Class Pre-K program, has been awarded the highest quality rating by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) for the past eight years. OSR is dedicated to working with pre-K programs to ensure that Alabama's 4-year-olds have access to high quality learning experiences to ensure they are prepared for school success.

Research shows that children benefit the most from high quality early learning experiences. OSR works with classrooms to promote those high quality experiences in Alabama. Chart 1 outlines the quality criteria defined by NIEER as well as how Alabama implements the criteria in its First Class Pre-K classrooms.

Chart 1: NIEER Quality in Alabama's First Class Pre-K Program

Quality Indicators	Office of School Readiness Recommendations
Early Learning Standards	Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children (Online at www.children.alabama.gov under the Office of School Readiness section)
Teacher Degree	Lead teacher must have a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education or Child Development, at minimum
Teacher Specialized Training	Lead teacher must have specialized training in early childhood field
Auxiliary Teacher Degree	Auxiliary teacher must have a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) or equivalent (9 hours of approved coursework in child development), at minimum
Teacher In-Service	Lead teacher must have at least 30 hours yearly in-service professional development and training
Maximum Class Size	Maximum number of children per classroom must be 20 or fewer; recommended number is 18
Staff-Child Ratio	Lowest acceptable ratio of staff to children in classroom must be 1:10 or better
Screening/Referral and Support Services	Provide physical, vision, hearing and dental screenings and referrals and at least one additional support service to families; all parents complete the Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 (ASQ-3) developmental screener
Comprehensive Curriculum	First Class Pre-K classrooms will implement the Alabama First Class Framework, which consists of the Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children, First Class Program Guidelines, First Class Classroom Guidelines, the ASQ-3 Developmental Screener and the Teaching Strategies GOLD Assessment. Classroom guidance and support will be provided by First Class Coaches.
Monitoring	Site visits and monitoring will be provided by First Class Monitors to ensure quality and compliance. <i>The Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS)</i> and other assessments are administered to ensure the program is meeting children's needs.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

PA 1 Compliance with OSR Program Guidelines Required

The Program Guidelines have been created and published by OSR to ensure that programs provide a safe and high quality learning environment for the students in Alabama's state funded First Class Pre-K program.

The Program Guidelines also provide guidance and regulations for the expenditures of state funds. If programs do not use state dollars for the purpose for which they are intended, those programs will be immediately defunded.

Failure to adhere to any of the written OSR Program Guidelines may result in a warning, probation, suspension, and/or immediate defunding of the program. A work-plan will be given to programs placed on probation, and implementation of the work-plan will be supported by the OSR staff. If the program continues to be deficient, OSR may suspend or defund the program. A defunded program must wait one year to reapply for a First Class Pre-K grant. Programs may be immediately defunded if violations are considered severe. All grant funds must be used according to OSR Guidelines and/or applicable state and federal laws.

PA 2 Financial Guidelines

OSR funds high quality pre-K programs through a competitive grant application process. Grants are funded by state funds appropriated through the Alabama legislature each year. All programs should understand that the receipt of state dollars is a responsibility and should ensure that funds received are spent for the purposes of high quality pre-K in the classroom for which they are appropriated.

PA 2.1 Awarding of Contracts

Contracts will be awarded to First Class providers through a competitive process, subject to funding availability, previous program compliance (for continuation programs), and identified regional need. Programs are reviewed every third year for refunding based on the availability of funds and adherence to OSR recommendations and stipulations. It is important that programs demonstrate financial solvency and sound fiscal management. All programs are expected to receive and spend state education trust fund dollars in accordance with state and federal requirements.

PA 2.2 Selection of OSR First Class Pre-K Sites

The basis for selection of applicants proposing to operate an OSR First Class Pre-K program will be based on the applicant's ability to demonstrate, in their application, the most effective implementation of a First Class Pre-K program. Interested applicants will go through a competitive grant process, which is conducted **annually**. Existing programs will be required to reapply every third year. Since PLUS grants are only for the first year, newly funded PLUS grantees will be required to reapply for a different grant type after their first year.

The criteria for selection will include:

- The quality of the proposed program as indicated by adherence to the OSR Program Guidelines and Quality Assurances
- The qualifications and experience of the applicant and staff in planning, organizing and providing comprehensive child development services to families and children at the community level

- The program design and suitability of facilities and equipment proposed to be used in carrying out the program
- Cost effectiveness of the proposed program
- The need for pre-K services in the community served by the applicant

PA 2.3 Grant Application and Notification of Contract Awards

All approved programs will receive written notification.

PA 2.4 Class Budgets

All classes must have 18 students in order to receive funding. If a classroom has less than 18 students, there should be approved waivers to decrease the number of students required (see Section PA 4.5.) If a classroom has fewer than 18 students and no approved waivers, the class may be placed on probation and their OSR check disbursements will be prorated.

Budgets for the upcoming year should be submitted to OSR no later than September 30. Budgets must reflect the total amount of **all funds** used to support the OSR classroom including 25% matching funds, and parent fees (if collected.)

Budgets are required to be entered into the OSR electronic database at the beginning of the year and must be entered into *BaselineEdge*. Amendments may be made in January. Any budget change greater than 10% per line item will need approval of the First Class Monitor. The comment box at the bottom of the budget in *BaselineEdge* should be used to document approved budget changes. Sites not complying with budget submission by required dates will be penalized according to section PA 3.1 of the OSR Program Guidelines.

PA 2.5 Contract Signatory

The legal signatory for the program entity must sign and submit the grant award letter and the quality assurances.

PA 2.6 Disbursement of Funds

Funds to pre-K programs will be disbursed in three equal payments, subject to the availability of funds and on receipt of completed, required paperwork. Anticipated disbursements of funds will be in November, February, and July. First Class programs cannot wait until the first disbursement from OSR to pay the lead and auxiliary teacher salaries or to purchase required equipment and supplies for the OSR classroom.

All OSR funds must be spent by September 30, 2015 or funds will be returned to OSR. A spending plan for funds remaining on May 31st must be submitted to the program's First Class Monitor by June 15th.

PA 2.7 Budget Guidelines

Each program is expected to provide at least a 25% match (cash or in-kind). The following items may be included in your budget for OSR funds:

Type of Expenditure	Allowed Items	Documentation Required
Personnel Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pay for lead teacher and auxiliary teacher in compliance with salary scale in Appendix A. • Administrative costs (Must not exceed 6% of grant amount) • Substitute teachers (Must provide substitute teacher in absence of either lead or auxiliary teacher) • Background checks (only if they are due) <p>Note: OSR requirements are that lead teachers and auxiliary teachers are paid within the pay scale provided by OSR in Appendix A. This amount does not include benefits.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of cancelled checks from bank statements
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insurance, retirement, payroll taxes or other benefits for lead teacher and/or auxiliary teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Copies of cancelled checks from bank statements
Educational Equipment and Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional materials and supplies for classroom • Playground equipment and supplies • Equipment over \$300 must be approved by OSR staff • Classroom furnishings <p>(Supply lists and furnishings lists are available in Appendix S)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom electronic equipment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit card statements or copies of cancelled checks from bank statements
Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Travel in support of classroom • In-state field trips (including travel costs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit card statements or copies of cancelled checks from bank statements
Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration, travel, lodging and food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit card statements or copies of cancelled checks from bank statements
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Classroom maintenance and cleaning supplies • Computer support (limited) • Utilities (\$1,000 maximum) • Parent programs and involvement • Safety equipment and supplies • Nutritional allowance (prior approval required) • Administrative supplies (\$500 maximum) • Advertising (\$1,000 maximum) 	<p>At least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit card statements • Copies of cancelled checks from bank statements • Receipts • Purchase orders
Health Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, hearing, dental and physical screenings • Special Education Services • Health services and supplies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Credit card statements or copies of cancelled checks from bank statements

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, all equipment \$300.00 or more must be inventoried using the form in Appendix O. Inventory lists should be kept on-site and reviewed by First Class Monitors.

All budget changes that exceed 10% of a line item must be approved by the First Class Monitor prior to the expenditure.

PA 2.8 Program Fees

All children must receive the same opportunities during the 6.5 hour program day. The amount of parent fees allowed depends on the type of First Class grant awarded to the grantee:

For Excellence Grants, programs may charge parents the normal cost of child care that is common in the local community.

For Tiered and Plus Grants, fees may be charged, but must not exceed the amounts outlined in Appendix F.

Parent Fees- If programs choose to collect parent fees, they must show, on the budget form provided, how that money is reinvested in the OSR classroom.

No child may be denied access due to the family's inability to pay requested parent fees. Sites may seek help from local task forces for scholarships and fundraising events.

Field trips made during the day must be free and available to all children. Pre-K funds may be used to provide field trips or other appropriate activities for children. **If extracurricular activities such as computer, dance, or art are included in the 6.5 hour day, they must be free and available to all First Class children.**

No additional fees, for anything other than meals, may be required of any child for the provision of First Class services (e.g., registration, uniforms, field trips, curriculum fees, classroom supplies, photographs, t-shirts). Voluntary donations may be requested. However, no child may be denied participation if families do not give requested donations. Children designated as Title I, Title III, Migrant or Homeless may not be charged fees.

PA 2.9 Fee Structure

Documentation that explains the fee structure for non-pre-K program days (holiday/vacation times) for children, transportation (optional) and/or food services shall be given to each family. Copies of this documentation should be kept on file.

PA 2.10 Uniforms

Centers with uniform policies may request that parents dress children in uniforms. OSR Program Directors are urged to provide uniforms for those who cannot afford them or work with community resources to secure uniforms.

PA 3 Documentation Requirements

First Class Pre-K Programs are expected to complete, submit, and file all documents required by OSR. Copies of all First Class documents and records, for each program year, should be retained on-site for three (3) years following the final financial report for that year. OSR documentation is confidential and must be stored under lock and key.

Information completed on-line:

1. Teacher Training Verification
2. Site Demographic Information
3. Standardized Site Budget
4. Teacher Demographic Information
5. End of the Year Report completed by OSR Directors with input from the teachers
6. Parent, teacher and director surveys
7. Class and student enrollment in Teaching Strategies GOLD
8. Teaching Strategies GOLD documentation for all OSR Checkpoints (October 24, February 20 and May 15)
9. Required staff, student, parent and class information entered into *BaselineEdge*

Information to be kept on-site:

1. Family Information Forms for all children including those on the waiting list (Appendix C)

2. Ages and Stages Questionnaire-3 screeners for every child (information and protocols on external drive)
3. Parent Involvement Log (Appendix M)
4. List of suggested parent workshops
5. Teacher training verification (copies of certificates etc.)
6. New Student Checklist (Appendix I)
7. OSR Equipment Inventory Form (Appendix O)
8. Teaching Strategies GOLD Parent Conference Verification Forms (printed directly from GOLD)
9. Copies of Parent Contracts (Appendix D)
10. Notice of Receipt and Explanation of Code of Student Behavior (Appendix E)
11. Parent Orientation Verification Form (Appendix K)
12. Required list of equipment, materials, & supplies/supply purchase list (Appendix S)
13. Timeline for submission of paperwork (found at the beginning of Appendices)
14. Permission for and review of health screening form (Appendix F)
15. Health Screening Form for all children (Appendix G)
16. Proof of immunizations (typically a blue card) or affidavit citing religious beliefs

Originals to be mailed to OSR:

1. Teacher transcripts mailed to Pimika Humphrey (official from college or university)
2. Criminal background checks mailed to Pimika Humphries (if applicable; see section TS 3.1)

Mailing Address:

Office of School Readiness
P.O. Box 302755
Montgomery, AL 36130-2755

Forms to be picked up by First Class Monitors:

1. Original Parent Contracts (Appendix D)

The pre-K provider must keep copies of all documents on file. For a list of documents needed for children who enroll any time after September 1st, please see the New Student Checklist (Appendix I.)

PA 3.1 Failure to Meet OSR Documentation Requirements

Failure to submit and maintain the reports and information listed above will result in withholding of funds. Continued failure to submit documents on time (i.e. more than once) will result in discontinuation of the First Class grant. Please see the timeline at the beginning of the Appendices for comprehensive list of forms and due dates as well as how to submit them.

Programs that are more than **30 days** late with all required paperwork will receive checks reduced by **\$2,000**. If a site is **60 days** late with required paperwork, the program will be placed on **probation** and funds for the **current disbursements will be forfeited**. If the site is **90 days** late w/required paperwork, the **site may be defunded** for the next year.

PA 4 Program Delivery

PA 4.1 Instruction Time and Number of Days

The Alabama Developmental Standards for Preschool Children is the guiding document for lesson planning and classroom instruction. The Performance Standards provide the learning outcomes to ensure that Alabama's 4 year olds enter school ready to succeed. The standards have recently been updated to incorporate special education standards for preschool children.

The First Class program is designed to provide a full day of developmentally appropriate instruction and support for 4-year-old children. The pre-K program shall provide 6.5 hours of high quality and developmentally appropriate activities and instruction, five days per week. OSR recommends 180 days per year for eligible 4-year-old children. Each grantee is funded for 187 days to include 7 days of professional development for staff.

Both lead and auxiliary teachers should be compensated and are expected to work for at least 187 days per year; 180 days are for classroom instruction, 7 days are for professional development to improve classroom practice.

PA 4.2 Dates of Operation

The First Class programs will begin no later than September 1st. Sites in public schools will be expected to coordinate with the local school calendar adopted by the local board of education. Head Start programs and local childcare programs are encouraged to follow their local school system calendar.

Make-up Days

Days missed due to inclement weather must be made up unless a state of emergency was declared for corresponding school system in which site exists. Days may be added to the end of the year or taken from previously identified breaks i.e. spring break, etc.

A revised calendar with dates must be submitted to the OSR Program Monitor and be provided to parents.

PA 4.3 Program/Staff Hours

The 6.5 hours of children's program shall begin no earlier than 7:30 a.m. The remaining 1-hour of the lead teacher and auxiliary teacher's 7.5-hour funded day should be used for a variety of First Class program activities, such as parent conferences, meetings with First Class Coaches and Monitors, planning, etc. The 7.5-hour day must be solely dedicated to pre-K operations. The daily classroom schedule will be approved by OSR.

PA 4.4 Wrap- Around Services

OSR does not require or provide extended day services. Extended day services for pre-K children may be provided at the parent's expense. Income eligible families may receive services through the Department of Human Resources, Childcare Management Agency office or the Department of Family and Children's Services subsidized childcare program. If OSR staff members are used to work in wrap around services, OSR funds may not be used for compensation.

PA 4.5 Enrollment

First Class Pre-K programs are expected to begin the school year with a minimum of 16 children in the classroom. By September 30th, programs are expected to either have a full enrollment of 18 children, or approved waivers to support having less than 18 children. Waivers may be requested for children with diagnosed disabilities or significant developmental delays or significant behavior challenges that require additional time and attention from

the teaching staff. Please reference Appendix H for the Waiver Request Form that should be sent to the OSR Regional Manager.

Head Start classrooms with more than 18 children enrolled must submit a waiver to increase their class size up to 20 children (Appendix H). This is allowed only for Head Start programs due to federal mandates. The waiver must be approved by OSR. An approved waiver means that the classroom meets the minimum square footage requirement both in the classroom and on the playground. The classroom should also have ample materials to support the increase in children.

Programs may use a staggered approach at the beginning of the school year. This would allow classrooms to start the first few days with fewer than 18 students coming each day. For example, 9 students come the first day, then the remaining 9 students may come the second day and then all 18 students come the third day. Using this approach will not affect the total number of days the children are required to attend school.

PA 4.6 Required Health Information, Screenings and Referrals

Proof of Immunizations

Upon admission into First Class, the pre-K provider shall ensure that evidence of age-appropriate, up-to-date immunizations (blue card) or signed religious beliefs affidavits against such immunizations are maintained on-site for each child.

Screenings

Parents or guardians will grant their permission to screen their child's vision, hearing, dental and physical health. This will be done using the form in Appendix F. Parents or guardians will check the screenings they are granting permission for on the form. Parents or guardians also have the option to opt-out and not allow their child to receive some or all of the screenings offered.

Parents or guardians will be asked to sign the bottom of the form in Appendix F after all four screenings have been completed, to indicate that they have been informed of the results of the screenings. Programs are encouraged to make copies of the completed screening form prior to sending them home for a signature in case they are lost in transit. Teachers may also choose to conference with parents to review the results. Appropriate referrals should be made based on screening results.

Physical Screenings

Programs are required to provide physical screenings **on site**. These may be conducted by a medical professional such as a nurse, nurse practitioner or physician's assistant. They do **NOT** have to be completed by a physician. They must include information regarding height, weight, body mass index and blood pressure. Programs are encouraged to use the form in Appendix G, **but other forms may be accepted as long as they contain the same information**. These screenings must be completed no later than **March 31, 2015**. However, programs are encouraged to complete them closer to the beginning of the school year if possible. If a teacher has concerns about a child's physical health prior to the screening, he or she is encouraged to have a conference to discuss with the child's parent or guardian.

Hearing Screenings

All programs must offer hearing screenings by trained professionals **onsite**. Programs are encouraged to use the form in Appendix F but other forms may be accepted as long as they contain the same information. The screenings must be completed no later than **March 31, 2015**.

Vision Screenings

All programs must offer vision screenings by trained professionals **onsite**. OSR has partnered with Focus First (www.impactalabama.org) to provide these screenings state-wide. Programs are encouraged to use the form in Appendix F but other forms may be accepted as long as they contain the same information. The screenings must be completed by **March 31, 2015**.

Dental Screenings

All programs must offer dental screenings by trained professionals **onsite**. OSR has partnered with Sarrell Dental (www.sarrelldental.org) to offer these screenings state-wide. Programs are encouraged to use the form in Appendix F but other forms may be accepted as long as they contain the same information. The screenings must be completed by **March 31, 2015**.

Developmental Screening (ASQ-3)

OSR classrooms are required to have **parent-completed** ASQ-3 screeners completed and scored within 30 days of the start of school. Parents should be given the entire ASQ-3 protocol except for the back page. This page will be scored and completed by the teachers. Completion of the ASQ-3 can be counted for 1 hour of parent involvement credit. If parents have not returned a completed ASQ-3 in a timely manner, the teacher may complete the screener. However, it should be completed based on teacher observations of the child. Teachers should not complete each task with a child to answer the questions on the screener. After the teachers have scored the ASQ-3, they will provide feedback to the parents at parent teacher conferences.

Local Children's Policy Councils may be contacted to schedule a Books, Balls and Blocks event to assist parents and guardians in completing the ASQ-3 screening.

PA 4.6 Community Collaboration

The First Class Pre-K program should partner with the county's Children's Policy Council (CPC), Early Childhood Education committee. Children's Policy Councils are coordinated by Liletta Jenkins (334.353.2710/liletta.jenkins@dca.alabama.gov) at the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs. The Early Childhood Education Committees will be working to gather data about location of education programs and services available for 4-year-olds in each county. Community collaboration is an important component in the continuing growth of high quality pre-K.

PA 4.7 Licensing

Programs must abide by minimum standards and hold a current license from or be willing to be licensed by the Department of Human Resources (DHR.) For licensing information, contact the Alabama Department of Human Resources Child Care Services 334-242-1310 or via the web at www.dhr.alabama.gov.

Public school systems are not required to be licensed by DHR. However, programs receiving OSR funding must adhere to DHR safety requirements for both the classroom and the playground.

First Class programs that are placed on probation by DHR are automatically suspended by DCA/OSR. Funds are forfeited during the period of probation.

PA 4.8 Accreditation

If you are an accredited site by NAC, NAEYC or SACS, please send accreditation documentation to OSR within 30 days of your program start date. OSR encourages all sites to pursue accreditation from appropriate organizations.

PA 4.9 Transportation

Transportation services are not provided by OSR. However, individual sites that choose to provide transportation must adhere to local transportation guidelines, laws, and DHR Minimum Standards (i.e. safety belts/car seats).

PA 4.10 Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting and Investigations

It is required by law for anyone associated with the OSR First Class Pre-K program to report suspected abuse or neglect. Please see full text of Alabama's Mandatory Child Abuse and Neglect reporting law in Appendix P.

The pre-K provider must notify OSR anytime there is an open abuse or neglect investigation involving the OSR First Class Pre-K classroom and resolution is completed.

OSR will temporarily suspend all First Class Programs that are suspended by DHR for the length of time that it takes the program to be reinstated by DHR.

PA 5 Recruitment and Enrollment Process

PA 5.1 Equal Access

The recruitment process for the OSR program must be open and nondiscriminatory. Children cannot be denied participation on the basis of income, race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (TITLE IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Title 11 of the Vocational Education Amendments of 1976); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs. Income may not be used as a consideration for enrollment unless a program is federally mandated to do so.

There must be a wide distribution of recruitment notices in English and Spanish (where appropriate). The notices should state that a **random selection drawing** will be used to choose the children in the OSR pre-K classroom unless otherwise mandated by Federal law. Random selection means that every child in the population has an equal chance of being selected. Criteria such as gender, race, socio-economic status, academic ability etc. may NOT be used in drawing the children. For example, classrooms should not be limited to 9 boys and 9 girls. The random selection drawing should be done in a public forum.

Random selection may be based on the percentage of funds provided by the OSR grant. For example, if the grant funds represent 50% of the total cost for actual class operations, then 50% of the children will be randomly selected (9 out of 18.) Monitors can assist in reviewing the budget to calculate this number. It is strongly recommended to use random selection exclusively if possible. A class of children with culturally, socio-economic, and gender diversity that is open equally to all Alabama children whose parents choose for them to participate is the ideal model of delivery.

PA 5.2 Recruitment

Notices for recruitment **MUST** be posted at least one month in advance of the recruitment date in locations such as childcare centers, pediatrician offices, health departments, Children Policy Council meetings, and newspapers. Recruitment posters and or flyers will be provided to programs by OSR.

Recruitment notices **MUST** include: (a) date, time, location and required information needed for application, (b) nondiscriminatory and equal opportunity statements, and (c) the date and time of the random selection drawing.

Suggested timeline of recruitment events for EXISTING classrooms:

- February: Programs should place recruitment notices around the community (program & First Class Monitors & Coaches)
- April 1 – 30: Programs will accept the Family Information Form (application) from parents. Parents should also provide a copy of their most recent utility bill to as proof of Alabama residency.
- May - Programs will hold a random selection drawing and notify parents of their child's enrollment status

Newly selected sites will be notified of their timeline during the grant award process.

NOTE- if your classroom is located in a center that currently has a program for 3-year-old children, those children MAY NOT automatically be placed in the OSR First Class Pre-K classroom unless your program is federally mandated. Those children must submit Family Information Forms and be placed in the random selection drawing like all other children from the community who submit applications. However, you may use the process described in paragraph 3 of section PA 5.1.

PA 5.3 Waiting Lists

Recruitment for the classroom should continue throughout the year in order to maintain enrollment and a comprehensive waiting list. Family Information Forms must be maintained on site for all children who are not attending the program due to a lack of space.

PA 5.4 Maintaining OSR Enrollment

If a child withdraws from the classroom or has to be dismissed from the classroom after April 1st, the program may choose not to replace that child and have fewer than 18 children enrolled for the remainder of the school year.

PA 5.5 Including Children with Special Needs

OSR supports diversity in First Class Pre-K classrooms. However, OSR funds cannot be used to create special education pre-K classrooms. It is strongly recommended that OSR classrooms carefully consider and plan for children with disabilities to ensure that resources are in place in the First Class Pre-K classroom. Programs are encouraged to consult with their local education agency (LEA) special education staff for resources available through the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP.)

THE ALABAMA PRE-K CLASSROOM

CR 1 Learning Environment

First Class Pre-K providers are expected to provide a learning environment which is at minimum clean, safe, and conducive to high quality learning. OSR staff will conduct an assessment of the environment and make recommendations for improvement as needed.

Pre-K providers shall maintain appropriate equipment, materials and supplies for each pre-K classroom (see Appendix S.) Classroom furniture is required at the beginning of the school year.

CR 1.1 Purchase of Equipment, Materials, and Supplies

It is expected that each First Class classroom will provide a high quality learning environment which includes appropriate classroom equipment, materials and supplies. First Class funds may be used for purchase of equipment, materials and supplies for the classroom. Single item purchases over \$300 must be pre-approved by the First Class Monitor and a copy of purchases should be provided to the OSR Monitor. Documentation of single-

item purchases over \$300 must be provided to the OSR Monitor using the Classroom Inventory and Purchase List (Appendix O).

CR 1.2 Ownership of Equipment

If a new classroom purchases equipment using First Class funds from OSR and is in existence for less than two years, the program will be responsible for reimbursing OSR for the equipment.

CR 2 Classroom Delivery

CR 2.1 Space

Each classroom shall have licensed space for 18 children, which includes a minimum of 35 square feet per child and 60 square feet per child on the playground.

CR 2.2 Teacher Student Ratio and Classroom Make-Up

Enrollment of 18 children in all OSR classrooms is expected. This provides a 9 to 1 teacher:child ratio. Head Start classrooms may have no more than 20 children in their classroom which will insure a 10:1ratio, however, they may request permission from Head Start to remain at 18. Head Start Classrooms must submit an OSR Waiver Request Form to request to increase their class size over 18 children (Appendix H.)

Two adults (lead teacher, auxiliary teacher, and/or substitute) must be present at all times, with the exception of the rest time. If either teacher is absent, the First Class program MUST provide a substitute. OSR funds may be used for substitute teachers. The OSR First Class lead or auxiliary teacher may not be taken out of the OSR classroom to fulfill any other role or duty in the school, Head Start Center or childcare center. Programs will be fined \$500 for each instance. Recurring violations will result in a program being defunded.

CR 2.3 Classroom Size Waivers Granted for Children with Diagnosed Disabilities , Significant Developmental Delays and/or Significant Behavior Challenges

Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, classrooms are allowed to begin the year with 16 children. However, classrooms are expected to either have 18 children enrolled by September 30th or have 16 children enrolled with two **approved** waivers. If the initial classroom make-up using a random selection drawing includes children with diagnosed disabilities, significant developmental delays or significant behavior challenges, programs may choose to observe those children for the first few weeks to determine if a waiver application is warranted. This waiver would allow the classroom to have fewer children as long as that child remains in the class. If the waiver is not approved, the program would be expected to add an additional child to the classroom, from the waiting list, if there is one.

Please see Appendix H for the waiver request form. This form should be completed and sent to the First Class Regional Manager.

If a child is identified as having a diagnosed disability, significant developmental delay or significant behavior challenges after the school year begins and another child drops out of pre-K or is dismissed from pre-K, the teacher may request a waiver to decrease the classroom size. Documentation must include a meeting with the parents to provide them information to direct them to the local education agency that is responsible for the identification and evaluation of children with special needs. For contact information to local special education coordinators contact the Alabama State Department of Education at 334.242.9700 or www.alsde.edu.

CR 2.4 Children with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

Children with diagnosed disabilities and significant special needs should receive services and staffing in accordance with their IEP (see Section CF 1.3.) OSR teachers should have a copy of all IEPs for the children in their classroom. OSR teachers should attend all IEP meetings if possible.

CR 2.5 Administration of Medication

First Class Pre-K providers must adhere to state licensing standards and federal and/or state law when administering medication to children (e.g. the Baby Douglas Law).

CR 2.6 Classroom Equipment, Materials and Supplies

Each classroom is expected to provide developmentally appropriate furnishings, decorations, manipulatives and activities. A list of required equipment, materials, and supplies can be found in Appendix S.

CR 2.7 Outdoor Play Area

Age appropriate, fenced-in, playground should be made available each day. Other opportunities for outside activities are encouraged (ex. tricycle trail, green space, gardens, etc.) Playgrounds should have a minimum of 60 square feet per child. Please see Gross Motor section of the Classroom Guidelines below for additional information.

CR 3 Instructional Services/Curriculum

CR 3.1 Curriculum

Evaluations of statewide early childhood pre-K systems indicate that the most effective programs link early learning standards with curriculum and assessment. The Alabama Office of School Readiness (OSR) has developed early learning standards for guiding First Class instructional practices. Teaching Strategies GOLD is the state assessment tool that will guide the appropriate alignment of the standards with teacher's instruction. Therefore, if teachers and administrators are choosing a curriculum, it is important that it aligns with the standards and GOLD assessment. Although OSR does not endorse any one curriculum, curriculum similar to The Creative Curriculum and the HighScope approach can support a teacher in developing strategies to assist children in mastering skills to meet OSR standards and cover the dimensions of the GOLD assessment to ensure school readiness. It is important that First Class teachers and administrators work closely with First Class Coaches and/or First Class Monitors to choose a curriculum that will help a teacher be successful. A curriculum must promote appropriate instructional practice and enhance learning and development while being consistent with the intent of the OSR First Class Framework.

CR 3.2 Orientation

An on-site parent orientation for all teaching and administrative staff and families shall be provided within 20 working days of commencement of pre-K services for children. Orientation may also occur prior to the start of the school year. See Appendix L for suggested topics to cover during parent orientation.

CR 3.3 Other Program Components

Breakfast, lunch, snacks, rest and supervised outdoor play are part of the First Class Pre-K program.

No part of the day may be religious in nature. A moment of silence is acceptable. Activities religious in nature must take place outside of the 6.5-hour school day.

Field trips are an important part of the educational experience. OSR recommends at least 1 off- site field trip. OSR funds may be used to pay for in-state field trips only. Programs should develop their own policies regarding field trips.

THE ALABAMA PRE-K CHILD AND FAMILY

The First Class Pre-K program does not discriminate against any child or family based on race or color, national origin, religion, class, gender, disability, or income. The First Class program encourages diversity in each of its classrooms. Any First Class grant recipient found to discriminate will be immediately defunded from the First Class program.

The intent of the program is to provide state supported, high quality, voluntary pre-K for Alabama's 4-year-olds.

CF 1 Pre-Kindergarten Child

CF 1.1 Age Requirement

Children must be four years of age on or before September 1, based on acceptable documentation, such as birth certificates, passports, official medical documents, or official documents from other countries. Children who are 5 years of age and are eligible for Kindergarten **may not** enroll in Alabama's First Class Pre-K program.

Children must be toilet trained upon entering the program, unless a medical condition exists that is documented by the child's physician.

CF 1.2 Residency Requirement

The child must be an Alabama resident and maintain residency while enrolled. For purposes of this program Alabama resident is defined as a child who resides in the state of Alabama, with proof of residence required (e.g. current utility bill). School systems may restrict residency to their school districts, but a written policy adopted by the local Board of Education must be in place in order to restrict enrollment.

CF 1.3 Required Health Information

Upon admission into First Class, the pre-K provider shall ensure that evidence of age-appropriate, up-to-date immunizations (blue card) or signed religious beliefs affidavits against such immunizations are maintained on-site for each child.

CF 1.4 Children with Special Needs

States and local school districts are required by federal law to educate preschool age children with special needs in typical early childhood programs alongside children who do not have special needs to the maximum extent appropriate. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires programs to include children with disabilities in pre-K classrooms side-by-side with their typically developing peers (Appendix Q.)

CF 2 Parent/Family Involvement Expectations

First Class Pre-K programs shall provide meaningful opportunities for families to be involved in their child's education. **First Class programs shall develop a comprehensive plan for family involvement** to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. An annual calendar specifying the ways parents may earn hours and the number of hours earned specified is due October 1st and will be reviewed by the First Class Monitor.

Parent/family participation in the OSR First Class Pre-K program is expected. Parents are responsible for completing 12 participation hours each school year. Examples of ways to participate are attending the parent orientation, completion of the ASQ-3, attending field trips, volunteering in the classroom, attending parent enrichment meetings, participating in IEP meetings and completing take-home activities. Teachers must specify the amount of time a parent will earn when working with their child on a project at home. When the project is returned to school, the teacher will document the amount of time the parent has earned and record it in the parent involvement log (see Appendix M.) Children may **not** be dismissed from OSR classrooms due to lack of parent involvement.

CF 2.1 Parent Programming

The following are examples of meaningful opportunities for families to be engaged in their child's education:

1. Home visits, including home visitation programs such as HIPPY, Parents as Teachers;
2. Formal and informal parent/teacher conferences;
3. Classroom visits and options for parents and families to participate in classroom activities;
4. Parent education;
5. Family involvement in decision making about their own child and about their child's early childhood program;
6. Opportunities to engage families outside of the regular service day.

CF 2.2 Parent Orientation

All OSR programs are required to have a parent orientation meeting within the first 20 working days of the school year. However, OSR recognizes the importance of having parent orientations prior to the start of school and encourages programs to conduct them in this manner. A list of topics to discuss at this meeting is found in Appendix L. Parent attendance at orientation is mandatory and must be documented on the Parent Orientation Verification and Sign-In Sheet (Appendix K.)

CF 2.3 Parent/ Teacher Conferences

At least two individual conferences per year between the lead teacher and parent/guardian are required. The first conference should be held after the October GOLD checkpoint but prior to December 15th. The second conference should be held after the May GOLD checkpoint and prior to May 31st. Both conferences should be documented in each child's on-site file by using the Teaching Strategies GOLD Family Conference Form.

CF 3 Student Attendance

CF 3.1 Procedures for Student Attendance

Pre-K providers are required to formulate written procedures for addressing issues regarding attendance and tardiness. These procedures should be shared with families during orientation. They will also be reviewed on site by the OSR Monitor. **Daily attendance records should be maintained on-site and include the dates when a child is absent and the dates/times when a child arrives late or leaves early.** The attendance procedures should specify actions to be taken by the pre-K provider if attendance issues become problematic. For example, the procedures could require a phone call to parents after three unexcused absences or tardies; a letter to parents from the director after six absences or tardies; a parent conference after eight or nine absences; referral to the First Class Coach after ten absences. The goal of the attendance policy is to assist families in establishing and maintaining regular school attendance patterns.

CF 3.2 Chronic Attendance Issues

Chronic tardiness is defined as late arrival or early departure more than 2 days per week. A definition of tardiness should be developed by the provider. A five to ten minute drop off time is an acceptable part of a tardiness definition.

Chronic absenteeism is defined as missing more than 4 days per month without medical or other reasonable explanation. Chronic tardiness or absenteeism may also be defined by an established regular attendance pattern(s), e.g., if a child is late every Monday or absent every Tuesday or leaves early every Friday.

CF 3.3 Dismissal Due to Chronic Tardiness or Chronic Absenteeism

Providers are required to document efforts to assist parents/guardians of children who do not attend on a regular basis, are routinely late, or routinely leave the program early in improving attendance. A meeting with the parent/guardian should occur to determine the reason(s) for the problem and identify ways to resolve the problem. Inability to resolve the problem after documented interventions should be referred for dismissal consideration. Please send a written request for dismissal to your First Class Coach. The following information should be included:

1. Number of school days so far in the year
2. Number of days the child has been absent and/or
3. Number of days the child has been tardy
4. Information regarding parent conferences to discuss tardiness and/or absenteeism and ways that were discussed to increase attendance and/or decrease tardiness

The program may only dismiss the child if approval is granted and received, in writing, from the First Class Regional Manager.

Consecutive Absenteeism is defined as not attending class for 10 consecutive days without a medical or other reasonable explanation. Children who are consecutively absent **must be dismissed** and removed from the OSR roster. OSR approval should be requested in writing and sent to the First Class Coach. The following information should be included in the request:

1. Dates the child was absent from the program
2. Date of documented parent meeting to discuss the absenteeism (if meeting was held)
3. Last date the child attended the program (this will be the dismissal date)

The program may only dismiss the child if approval is granted and received, in writing, from the First Class Regional Manager.

CF 3.4 Attendance expectations for children receiving special education services in locations other than the First Class Pre-K classroom

Occasionally, it will be necessary for children to receive special education services outside of the pre-K classroom. They may be provided in other sites in the community such as Head Start centers and elementary schools. It is acceptable for children to be absent from the pre-K program to receive these services as long as they are in attendance for at least 75% of the school week. The pre-K teacher should have documentation from the parent or local school system stating where the services will be provided (location), the frequency of the services (number of

days per week) and the duration of the services (30 minutes, an hour etc.) The teacher should also document the actual amount of time the student will be absent to ensure that the child will be in attendance for 75% of the school week. This information, along with a copy of the child's current IEP, should be kept on file in the pre-K classroom.

CF 4 Discipline, Suspension and Dismissal

CF 4.1 Student Discipline

No employee shall use any form of corporal punishment (which includes but is not limited to paddling, striking, pulling, pushing, swatting, placing hands on, or hitting) as a method of discipline in the First Class program. **No** use of time-out will be allowed. Examples of appropriate practices include: redirection, encouragement, problem solving, effective planning, calming strategies and smooth, engaging transitions.

CF 4.2 Reasons for Suspension or Dismissal of a Child from the Program

Parents are required to sign a Notice of Receipt of the First Class Code of Student Behavior (Appendix E) upon enrollment. OSR recognizes that there is a broad range of abilities considered developmentally appropriate for 4-year-old children. Once children have an appropriate amount of time to acclimate to the classroom environment, typical differences in behavior and skills will be apparent. When a teacher notices a child has significant behavioral, developmental or health issues, individualized interventions may be necessary. Information from the parent-completed ASQ-3 combined with information from the GOLD assessment may be used to substantiate the need for a parent conference to discuss a referral to the local school system's special education program for services and supports.

Programs must follow the procedures outlined below regarding modified attendance, suspension, or dismissal.

CF 4.3 Procedures for Modified Attendance (requires prior approval)

In some instances it may be necessary to have a student attend a modified school day to be successful. Examples may include a child who is extremely disruptive or difficult to manage during certain parts of the day. A child may have a hard time transitioning to school in the morning so it may be suggested that he temporarily come in 30 minutes after school starts in order to miss all of the chaos that goes on with lots of children arriving at the same time. If naptime occurs at the end of the day and a child is very disruptive during that time, he may temporarily be allowed to end his day prior to naptime.

Modified attendance (i.e. less than 6.5 hours of instructional time a day) requires prior approval from the First Class Regional Manager and the First Class Special Needs Coordinator. Modified attendance should be used in conjunction with child specific interventions and documented responses to the intervention. A referral for special education testing should also be discussed with the parent and documented. Programs must contact their First Class Coach to discuss requests for modified attendance and the submission of the necessary documentation detailed below. Requests for a modified day should include the following information:

1. Specific reason(s) a modified day is being requested.
2. Interventions already implemented to help the child benefit from the program, including any immediate suspensions.
3. Information including all documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes documenting ongoing involvement with the parents, including the discussion regarding a special education referral.

4. Behavioral documentation and instructional observations of the child supporting the modified attendance request
5. Documentation of consultation with local school system special needs personnel (if the child has an active IEP,) results of implemented interventions, and status of special education referral if applicable
6. Documentation of consultation with any other outside resources (i.e. child's pediatrician, counseling services, or local school system, etc.)
7. A written schedule including the length of the child's proposed day, proposed daily schedule including times and the activities during this time period and the justification for the proposed schedule
8. A written plan describing how the child's attendance will be increased over time to the typical 6.5 hour day.

The First Class Coach will consult with the First Class Regional Manager and the First Class Special Needs Coordinator for approval.

CF 4.4 Procedures for Immediate Suspension

An immediate suspension for up to two (2) days can be made in **emergency** situations any time the pre-K provider determines a child is causing harm to himself/herself or others; or, a child is unable to successfully participate in program activities (e.g. a child may exhibit behaviors that require a teacher to be one on one with him/her.)

Programs can implement immediate suspension (up to two days each) on a maximum of three occasions per child. No prior OSR approval is needed; however, the program's First Class Coach must be notified, the day the suspension occurs, using the Suspension Notification Form (Appendix J) that such action has been taken.

If all three immediate suspensions have been used and a child is a danger to self, peers, or staff; the child may be sent home for the day with a plan for the child's successful return. Use the following procedure:

1. Contact your First Class Coach the same day. Your First Class Coach will follow up with the teacher to consider accommodations such as a modified attendance, extended suspension, or dismissal.
2. Prepare all documentation of behaviors and strategies used to address concerns. The documentation must state the behavior, how often the behavior occurs, the interventions used, and the child's response to the interventions.
3. Schedule a conference with the child's parent during the two days the child is suspended, to discuss strategies and options. Document the conference, including parent's signature.

CF 4.5 Procedures for Extended Suspension (requires prior approval)

An extended suspension (i.e., more than two days and/or after more than three incidents of immediate suspension) requires prior approval from the First Class Regional Manager and the First Class Special Needs Coordinator. Examples of instances where this may be appropriate include but are not limited to: a program needing to wait for onsite intervention from local special education personnel or the OSR Special Needs Coordinator, waiting for a child to have a medication adjustment with a physician, or waiting to meet with parents to develop a plan for the child to be successful in the OSR classroom.

The following information is needed to request an extended suspension and should be sent to the First Class Coach:

1. Reason(s) extended suspension is being requested and the length of the extended suspension

2. Interventions attempted to help the child benefit from the program, including all immediate suspension information
3. Documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes showing ongoing involvement with the parents, including the parent's signature
4. Documentation of behavioral and instructional observations of the child supporting the extended suspension request
5. Documentation of consultation with local school system special needs personnel if the child has an active IEP, results of application of interventions, and status of special education referral if applicable
6. Documentation of consultation with any other outside resources (i.e. child's pediatrician, counseling services, etc.).

All extended suspension requests including supporting documentation should be sent to the First Class Coach who will consult with the First Class Regional Manager and the First Class Special Needs Coordinator. **Final approval for extended suspension requests will be made in writing by the First Class Regional Manager and the First Class Special Needs Coordinator within 5 working days.**

CF 4.6 Procedures for Dismissal (requires prior approval)

It is the intent of OSR that no child is dismissed from the First Class program unless absolutely necessary. Once a child has been enrolled, he/she cannot be dismissed from the pre-K program unless one of the following occurs: chronically disruptive, documented habitual pattern of behavior, repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in the class or with the ability of the other students to learn; and/or causing harm to himself/herself or others, involves three (3) or more incidents of aggression that could cause serious injury and significant property damage or destruction.

These incidents will be considered in the determination to approve dismissal but **do not** guarantee an automatic dismissal.

Pre-K providers must submit the following information to their First Class Coach:

1. Reason(s) dismissal is being requested
2. Attempted interventions to help the child benefit from the program, including any suspension information
3. All documentation of written correspondence and meeting notes showing ongoing involvement with the parents, including parent signatures
4. Behavioral and instructional observations of the child supporting the requested dismissal
5. All documentation of consultation with local school system special needs personnel if there is an active IEP, results of application of suggested interventions, and status of special education referral if applicable
6. Documentation of consultation with any other outside resources (i.e. child's pediatrician, counseling services, etc.)

All dismissal requests including supporting documentation should be sent to the First Class Coach who will consult with the First Class Regional Manager and the First Class Special Needs Coordinator. **Final approval for dismissal requests will be made in writing by both the First Class Special Needs Coordinator and the First Class Regional Manager within 10 working days.**

THE ALABAMA PRE-K TEACHING TEAM

TS 1 Lead Teachers

TS 1.1 Days of Service

All lead teachers are funded for 187 days of service (180 days of classroom instructional services provided to children and 7 days of pre/post planning and/or staff training). The teacher is expected to work and be compensated based on 7.5 hours of work per day which includes 6.5 hours of instruction and 1 hour of planning with the auxiliary teacher

Note: If a First Class provider requires teachers to work more than 187 days, the provider cannot use First Class program funds for this expense. If a First Class teacher is required to work more than 7.5 hours per day, the teacher must be paid using non-OSR funds.

In cases where the governor declares a state of emergency in your county, OSR teachers are to be paid for days out of school using OSR funds and missed school days do not have to be made up.

TS 1.2 Age Requirement

All lead teachers must be at least 21 years of age or older.

TS 1.3 Education Requirements

Lead teachers must have at least one of the following:

- Human Environmental Science Degree with a concentration in Early Childhood Development or Child Development.
- Early Childhood Education degree (B.S., B.A., or M.A./M.S.) with P-3 teacher certification.
- Special Education degree in Early Childhood with a minimum of 18 credit hours in early childhood/child development coursework, and teacher certification.

Note: Teacher certification is only required for teachers employed in public schools.

Waivers are no longer granted for teachers without the above credentials, effective August, 2011. Official transcripts on all NEW lead teachers must be submitted to OSR no later than October 1, 2014. Transcripts must be official and mailed to OSR from the actual institution. All degrees must be from an institution that has received regional accreditation.

TS 1.4 Lead Teacher Salary

Lead teacher salaries must be based upon the OSR Teacher Salary Schedule for non-public school teachers (see Appendix A), and upon the State Department of Education Teacher Salary Schedule for public school teachers (Appendix A). The aforementioned is the base salary and does not include benefits.

Programs are responsible for paying teacher salaries out of local funds until First Class funds are distributed to the program.

TS 2 Auxiliary Teachers

TS 2.1 Days of Service

All auxiliary teachers are funded for 187 days of service (180 days of classroom instructional services provided to children and 7 days of pre/post planning and/or staff training). All auxiliary teachers are expected to work and be compensated for a 7.5 hour work day to include 6.5 hours of instruction and 1 hour of planning in coordination with the lead teacher.

Note: If a First Class provider requires auxiliary teachers to work more than 187 days, the provider cannot use First Class program funds for this expense. If a First Class teacher is required to work more than 7.5 hours per day, the teacher must be paid using non-OSR funds.

In cases where the governor declares a state of emergency in your county, OSR teachers are to be paid for days out of school using OSR funds and missed school days do not have to be made up.

TS 2.2 Employment Requirements

An auxiliary teacher must meet all of the following minimum requirements:

- Be at least 19 years of age.
- Possess a high school diploma or GED.
- Possess a Child Development Associate credential (CDA) OR at least 9 credit hours of college coursework in the field of Early Childhood Education or Child Development from a regionally accredited institution.
- Possess appropriate experience (at least 12 *months*) working in early childhood or experience in other OSR approved settings.

Official transcripts of college coursework or a copy of the Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential for all **NEW** auxiliary teachers must be submitted to OSR no later than October 1, 2014. Transcripts must be officially mailed to OSR from the actual institution. All college coursework must be from an institution that has received regional accreditation.

TS 2.3 Auxiliary Salary

A minimum salary for auxiliary teachers is indicated on the OSR Salary Scale Appendix A). The aforementioned is the base salary and does not include benefits.

Programs are responsible for paying teacher salaries out of local funds until First Class funds are distributed to the program.

TS 3 General Personnel Requirements

TS 3.1 Criminal Background Checks

All First Class program personnel must have a satisfactory criminal background check, Child Abuse and Neglect (CAN) background check and fingerprinting, with documentation on file with their employer. Providers must mail an official copy of approval or the criminal background application to OSR 30 days after the program begins or the teacher(s) is hired. Criminal background checks are required of all First Class program personnel including substitute teachers.

Volunteer parents may not be left in the classroom unsupervised by classroom personnel. If First Class personnel are convicted of criminal behavior after employment in the First Class classroom, the grantee must inform OSR promptly.

TS 3.2 Employees

All First Class program personnel are employees of the pre-K provider, not OSR or the State of Alabama. First Class Pre-K personnel may not occupy more than one position during the 7.5 hour day (e.g. director and teacher; director and auxiliary teacher).

TS 3.3 Substitutes

The First Class provider shall ensure that a substitute lead teacher and/or substitute auxiliary teacher is present and working when the regular teacher(s) are absent, whether due to illness, required training or personal leave, etc. Long-term substitutes (i.e., lead teacher on maternity leave or extended leave longer than 3 weeks) should meet lead teacher requirements. Each site is responsible for compensating all substitutes. OSR funds may be used to pay substitute teachers.

Criminal background checks are required for all substitute teachers. Official copies of background checks must be submitted to OSR for long-term substitutes.

TS 4 Professional Development Requirements

TS 4.1 Importance of Professional Development

In order to maintain quality teaching standards, annual professional development is required for all staff directly associated with the First Class program. The OSR staff will work with a variety of providers to develop and deliver professional development for high quality pre-K.

TS 4.2 Attendance at OSR Trainings

All levels of administrative, teaching and support staff are required to attend training offered or approved by the OSR. Lead teachers must attend a minimum of 15 hours of OSR sponsored training each year plus 15 additional hours of training offered by local or regional programs, for a **total of 30** training hours. Auxiliary teachers must attend a minimum of 10 hours of OSR sponsored training each year plus 10 additional hours training offered by local or regional programs for a **total of 20** hours.

Because professional development is an important component of quality, OSR expects all sites to make training opportunities accessible to staff by paying for training, travel and substitutes from OSR funds. **“No shows” at any OSR sponsored training will be charged \$500 per class. The \$500 per class will be deducted from the next pre-K check disbursement.**

Teachers who are certified and employed by school systems who are using EDUCATEAlabama are required to participate in EDUCATEAlabama.

Online professional development opportunities approved by OSR may also serve as professional development hours. First Class Coaches are the best resources to learn about professional development opportunities and expectations.

Teachers are required to document all local and OSR training attendance using STI PD. Teachers should also keep training certificates onsite for verification of attendance.

Attendance at the OSR sponsored pre-K conference (1 ½ days) is **mandatory** training for all lead and auxiliary teachers. If only one teacher from a class attends the conference, the program will be fined \$500. Classes that have no representation at the conference will be charged \$1,000/class.

TS 4.3 Training Reimbursements to Staff

The provider shall ensure that pre-K funds are used to pay for substitute teachers and costs associated with staff travel (e.g. meals, lodging, mileage at the state mileage rate, which is currently .56) to all required state training sessions. In addition, the providers shall pay staff salaries and expenses for all required OSR trainings (up to 7 days), within **30 days** of training and/or upon receipt of invoices from teachers.

Instructional Support Team

IT 1 Technical Support

The Office of School Readiness will work closely with program sites to ensure the highest possible quality pre-K programs. The First Class Regional Managers, First Class Special Needs Coordinators, First Class Coaches and First Class Monitors will work closely with directors, lead teachers and auxiliary teachers throughout the year and will be available for consultation regarding questions about the program, enrollment, approval of equipment/materials/supplies requests, training needs, and other assistance.

OSR classrooms will be assigned a First Class Coach and a First Class Monitor. First Class Coaches will support classroom teachers by providing assistance with adhering to the **Classroom Guidelines**. They will also connect teachers and administrators among First Class programs. First Class Monitors will assist OSR Directors in adhering to the **Program Guidelines** and grant compliance.

OSR will also have First Class Special Needs Coordinators that will assist programs in working with children with disabilities, developmental delays and behavior challenges. They will consult with teachers and coaches utilizing technology (e-mail, videos, photographs), phone conversations and on-site visits.

IT 2 On-Site Evaluation

IT 2.1 Monitors

First Class Monitors will work closely with OSR Directors. They will monitor and evaluate program progress during monthly planned and random on-site visits throughout the year. They will provide guidance, support and resources to insure program quality.

IT 2.2 Coaches

First Class Coaches will provide feedback, coaching and assessments through regular site visits. Evaluation data are important for the overall First Class program and serves the purposes of continuous program improvement as well as measurement of progress toward goals. First Class Coaches will work closely with classroom teachers to identify and track progress toward goals.

Disciplinary Action for Non-Compliance with OSR Regulations

DA 1 Suspension of Pre-K Sites

- Disciplinary action will be imposed on pre-k sites that DO NOT meet OSR Program and/or Classroom Guidelines and stipulations by prescribed dates
- Recommendations and stipulations will be documented and shared with each site by First Class Monitors during each site visit
- Failure to comply with stipulations as mandated by the OSR Program Guidelines and given by assigned monitors may result in the recommendation of suspension.
- The assigned First Class Monitor will notify the program director, in writing, of intentions to suspend funding unless good cause is shown why such action should not be taken.

The suspension notice shall include:

- The reason(s) for the proposed suspension
- The effective date of the proposed suspension
- Information which states that the program has the opportunity to submit written material in opposition to the intended suspension and meet with the informal hearing committee

No funds will be disbursed to a program during suspension proceedings. Fund disbursement will begin when the program is reinstated or back in good standing.

DA 2 Informal Hearing

- An informal hearing committee will be composed of at least three OSR administrators.
- The assigned monitor will arrange a time and place for the informal hearing. Notice of the informal hearing date and time will be sent to the program and the informal hearing committee.
- If the program does not show for a hearing, the informal hearing process will continue.
- The informal hearing committee will determine the suspension status of a program.
- The decision of the informal hearing committee regarding suspension of a site will be made within five business days after the conclusion of the informal hearing. The written decision of the informal hearing committee will be promptly transmitted via certified mail to the assigned monitor and program director.
- A program who wants to appeal the suspension must forward a notice of appeal to the assigned monitor within ten (10) days after receipt of the suspension. The appeal must be made in writing and must fully set forth the grounds for the appeal and be accompanied by all of the documentation that the program believes is relevant and supportive of its position.
- Within five (5) days after receipt of the notice of appeal, the assigned monitor will contact the OSR Associate Director who will arrange a date and time for the formal hearing

DA 3 Formal Hearing

- The assigned monitor will notify the program of the date and time for the formal hearing.
- The formal hearing committee will be composed of the Commissioner of the Department of Children's Affairs (DCA), OSR Director or designee and the lead First Class Monitor or designee.
- A formal hearing will be scheduled no later than thirty (30) days after the assigned monitor has received the notice of appeal from the program.

DA 4 Termination of Pre-K Sites

- The assigned monitor may recommend a site for termination.
- Funding may be terminated for any or all of the following reasons:
 1. The program has misused or lost program funds
 2. The program is no longer a licensed center
 3. The program provides false data in submitted reports
 4. The program has failed to comply with the required guidelines and reporting requirements that are outlined in the OSR Program Guidelines

5. The program has failed to correct one or more deficiencies identified by the assigned monitor in an evaluation or documented during a site visit, in a timely manner

- The assigned First Class Monitor will notify the program, in writing, of intentions to terminate funding
- Within five (5) days of the recommendation for termination, the assigned First Class Monitor will contact the OSR Associate Director who will arrange a date and time for the formal hearing.
- A formal hearing will be scheduled within thirty (30) days of the recommendation for termination
- If the program director does not show for a formal hearing, the formal hearing process will continue.
- The OSR formal hearing committee may terminate funding.
- The decision of the formal hearing committee regarding termination of funds will be made within five (5) business days after the conclusion of the formal hearing. The written decision of the formal hearing committee will be promptly transmitted via certified mail to the assigned monitor and program.
- The decision of the formal hearing committee is final and MAY NOT be appealed.
- No funds will be disbursed to a program during termination proceedings.

DA 5 Conduct of Formal Hearing

- The presiding officer (OSR Associate Director) shall conduct a full and fair hearing, avoid delay, maintain order, and make a sufficient record of the facts and issues. To accomplish these ends, the presiding officer shall have all powers authorized by law and may make all procedural and evidentiary rulings necessary for the conduct of the hearing. The hearing shall be open to the public unless the presiding officer for cause shown, otherwise determines.
- The Alabama Department of Children's Affairs (DCA) Commissioner may immediately terminate funding in cases of child endangerment or gross negligence.
- The assigned First Class Monitor and program director are entitled to present their case by oral and/or documentary evidence, to submit rebuttal evidence and to conduct such examination and cross-examination as may be required for a full and true disclosure of all facts bearing on the issues. The issues shall be those stated in the filed notice.
- The decision of the formal hearing committee regarding suspension or termination of funds will be based on evidence provided during the hearing process and made within five (5) business days after the conclusion of the formal hearing.
- The written decision of the formal hearing committee will be promptly transmitted via certified mail to the assigned monitor and program.